

Madam Speaker, I rise today, to recognize the Overseas Hoa Hao Buddhism Association's 71st Anniversary of the Founding of Hoa Hao Buddhism. Today, Hoa Hao Buddhism is one of the six most important religions in Vietnam. Through the hardships and trials of Communist Vietnam, Hoa Hao Buddhism still exists with a mass of over four million followers closely united in their faith. In Orange County, the Hoa Hao Buddhist Church is a Member of the Vietnamese Interfaith Council, a body established in order to promote harmony between major religions in Vietnam.

The U.S. Department of State 2009 International Religious Freedom Report indicates that the Vietnamese government continues to persecute and restrict organized activities of religious organizations like Hoa Hao Buddhists. We are continuing to see more and more activists being detained and imprisoned for exercising their freedom of speech, religion and expression. I encourage my colleagues to continue to urge the State Department to re-designate Vietnam as a Country of Particular Concern and fight for those in Vietnam who are putting their lives in danger in the name of freedom.